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Chairman: Mr. Niculescu ..... (Romania)
later: Ms. Barrington (Vice-Chairman)..... (Ireland)

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The meeting was called to order at 5.10 p.m.

Agenda item 102: Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (A/55/222)

1. **Mr. Rahman** (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the state of preparations for the Third United Nations Conference on the Least-Developed Countries (A/55/222).

2. **Mr. Kumamaru** (Japan), speaking as Vice-Chairman of the Intergovernmental Preparatory Committee for the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, said that the Bureau of that Committee shared the concern expressed in various forums about the increasing marginalization of least developed countries from the full benefit of the phenomenal growth in the world economy over the previous two decades. The international community must work together with those countries to reverse that trend. The Third Conference must therefore come up with concrete and tangible outcomes aimed at accelerating growth, eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development in least developed countries.

3. At its first session, the Committee had agreed to recommend to the Conference a draft provisional agenda and provisional rules of procedure of the Conference. It had further agreed, that the Conference secretariat would prepare a draft annotated outline of the new programme of action (A/55/222, para. 11). The Trade and Development Board had considered the outline and had recommended that, in preparing the new programme of action, account should be taken, inter alia, of other ongoing processes within multilateral organizations.

4. The final consideration of the draft programme of action would be undertaken at the Committee's second session, which would be held in the first week of April 2001. He believed that, among other things, the programme of action should continue to be developed within the Preparatory Committee and that the Committee should work together with the civil society actors who would participate in the other parallel events to develop the contribution that they could make to the process. He appealed for active and effective participation by all stakeholders at the national level in support of the Conference process.

5. **Mr. Levitte** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey, said that the least developed countries should remain at the heart of Europe's priorities. The European Union attached the greatest importance to ensuring that the main goal of the Conference was the eradication of poverty from and attainment of sustainable development in the least developed countries. It was essential that the Conference should be based on a global approach to development, that reflected not only basic economic aspects but also the social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. That approach should be based on existing processes including the poverty reduction strategy process and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). Such a global approach, which would take into account the wide range of situations in different countries, should use strategies that contributed to the goals of consolidating peace and preventing conflicts, strengthening democracy and reducing inequalities, in particular between men and women. The Conference must take a detailed look at the basic needs of least developed countries, many of them still faced a wide range of impediments to achieving sustainable growth. Moreover, since their development efforts were often hampered by a lack of internal and external stability, due in particular to armed conflicts, the development strategies to be defined should focus on strengthening those countries' institutional capacities, particularly strengthening civil society and participatory decision-making processes and creating an environment favourable to development.

6. The programme of action to be adopted at the end of the Conference should include measurable, applicable and operational measures and should be adapted to the wide range of situations encountered in the least developed countries. The latter must be closely involved in the entire preparatory process and in the Conference itself. The European Union was pleased that civil society, business communities and decentralized authorities had been invited to take part in the general discussions.

7. **Mr. Ibrahim** (Nigeria), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group of 77 saw the forthcoming third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries as a challenge to the

international community to review the implementation of international support measures, particularly in the areas of debt, official development assistance, trade and investment and the integration of those economies into the global economy. Given that the 48 least developed countries had 10 per cent of the world population but accounted for only 0.4 per cent of global imports and, 0.6 per cent of global exports, the issue assumed a moral dimension.

8. It was of deep concern to the Group of 77 that, in a world shaped by globalization and new technologies, the least developed countries had continued to be marginalized from the global economy and the international trading system, and were receiving little by way of foreign direct investment and official development assistance.

9. In recognition of those conditions, at the recent South Summit, in Havana, the Group had sought a new spirit of international cooperation based on common but differentiated responsibilities between the developing and industrialized countries, and had called for outright cancellation of debt, particularly for the least developed countries. The forthcoming Conference would provide a unique opportunity to the international community to take concrete and comprehensive decisions, including a new programme of action for the new millennium. Furthermore, measures from the Programme of Action for the 1990s should be revisited, including achievement of targets for official development assistance.

10. Full participation of the developing countries in the remaining preparatory meetings and the Conference itself must be ensured; that would call for measures to facilitate financing for representatives of those countries to attend those meetings. The institutional mechanism for follow-up and implementation of the new programmes of action should also be strengthened.

11. At the dawn of the new millennium, no part of humanity should be left wallowing in poverty. The Conference provided the opportunity to renew the commitment to the least developed countries, and he looked forward to concrete action by the Committee to reach that goal.

Ms. Barrington (Ireland), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

12. **Mr. Kolby** (Norway) said that all development actors should be actively involved in the preparations for and follow-up to the Conference. Preparations at the national level were crucial, as well, and should seek to involve the private sector and civil society.

13. The main focus of the programme of action for the Conference should be poverty eradication, with people at its centre. The draft outline for the programme was promising in that regard. If the new programme of action was to be an efficient policy instrument, it should contain clear targets and tools to measure concrete performance within specific time-frames, both for least developed countries and for donors.

14. The Conference should aim at specific improvements in several areas, including official development assistance and development finance, generating more resources for development, and trade and market access. However, improvements in the international economic environment alone would not automatically generate economic growth and contribute to poverty alleviation. Good governance, appropriate domestic policies and political stability were fundamental factors for promoting economic growth and sustainable development.

15. Norway attached great importance to the preparatory process for the Conference and would do its utmost to make constructive contributions. The Brussels Conference must lead to a stronger partnership between the least developed countries and the international community.

Agenda item 95: Environment and sustainable development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 (*continued*)

Draft resolution A/C.2/55/L.17

16. **Mr. Anaedu** (Nigeria), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, introduced the draft resolution entitled "Report of the sixth special session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme", and drew attention to paragraphs 5 and 6.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.